

I thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) for the opportunity to go on the visit. It was a wonderful trip. I got to know a lot about the gentleman. As a matter of fact, a young fellow named Chris Ruehl was telling us about the 278th, if the gentleman from Nebraska remembers, and he got emotional and showed pictures, and he even found out some of the trials that we had had in Tennessee, which I will not express here on the House floor, but he even gave us a history of part of Tennessee that he learned from some of our 278th. So our folks of the 278th are serving us well in Iraq, and when they come back home, we will welcome them with open arms.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for his comments. And we will not even get into that elephant that was hung in his district. That is for another special order.

I just want to mention the bravery of Iraqi officials. We kind of stick our necks out here a little bit, but over there when they run for office, they are literally putting their life on the line and their families. And that jumped out at us.

The other thing I might mention is that General Casey mentioned to us that he thought things were going better since the elections, but he said the wild card here is the issue of the Sunnis, are the Sunnis going to be incorporated?

□ 2230

That is still up for grabs. So we do not want to leave the American people with an impression that everything is perfect. There are still problems. But I think anyone who goes there and spends time there, spends time with the soldiers, from either party, we may disagree on how we got there, whether we should have gone there, but you have to be impressed with the soldiers in this situation.

If anyone has a closing comment for the good of the order, we would be glad to hear it from any of you.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I thank the gentleman.

I wanted to also acknowledge that the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) joined us there, along with the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. GRANGER) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS).

The other insight I had, and we shared this with General Casey and Dr. Jafari, local governments are going to be crucial to success in Iraq. After I returned, we had Baghdad city council members visit Denver, and I know the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. BEAUPREZ) met with them. They are the people who are in charge of making sure the lights are on, the garbage is collected and the potholes are filled and that local services are delivered. If we do that and they do that, then the local Iraqi people will see the benefits of self-government.

We pay a lot of attention to the national government, and it is important, because they will be charged with the defense of the Nation and they will present the face of Iraq to the world, but those local governments are crucial. The civil affairs officers in our military and the civilian non-government organizations that are there, we need to remember that we have to support them in every way possible.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, it makes it all work.

Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed this. We enjoyed the trip and thank all of you for participating tonight. Again, we tried to show that a lot of us do get along pretty well. Some of the best hours here are in the gym and places like that, where we do not really have an identity as Republicans or Democrats, and we simply come together and try to solve problems in the country.

I was honored to have time with these gentleman. I thought I learned a lot. I learned a lot from the Iraqis, but I learned a lot from you, and thank I you for participating tonight.

THE FINANCIAL CONDITION OF OUR NATION'S GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, as whip of the Blue Dog Coalition I rise this evening to talk about the financial condition of our Nation's government. There are about 35 of us that are fiscally conservative Democrats. We refer to ourselves as members of the Blue Dog Coalition and we are trying to bring some common sense back to our Nation's government as it relates to trying to restore some fiscal discipline to the way we operate our government.

Our Nation today is \$7.769 trillion in debt. To put that another way, our Nation today is spending \$160 billion a year simply paying interest on the national debt. That is about \$500 million a day. In fact, it is \$13 billion per month, it is \$444 million per day, it is \$18 million an hour, it is \$308,000 a minute, or \$5,100 a second. That is how much our Nation is simply taking tax money from you and me and using it to pay interest on the national debt.

I have got about \$4 billion in road needs in Arkansas's Fourth Congressional District, which includes 29 counties and 150 towns and three interstate projects that are now under construc-

tion. Give me less than a week's interest on the national debt and I can put thousands of people to work and complete these road projects, like I-49, I-69 and I-430, and four-laning U.S. Highway 167.

When we speak about the debt in public opinion surveys, it simply does not show up. It is like it is someone else's problem. But, Mr. Speaker, I contend this evening that it is every American citizen's problem, because every American citizen's share of the national debt equals \$26,000. \$26,000 is each individual's share of the national debt, including the children, the babies that are being born today. Every United States citizen would have to write a check for \$26,000 in order to get our Nation out of this hole that we are in.

Yet our Nation continues to go further in debt. For a fifth year in a row, we are seeing a budget that provides this Nation with the largest budget deficit ever in our Nation's history, which means more interest on more debt, which means more priorities continue to go unmet. Again, we are spending \$13 billion per month simply paying interest on the national debt. We could build 100 brand new elementary schools every single day in America just with the interest we are paying on the national debt.

Earlier today the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), a Blue Dog member, offered a proposal on the floor of this House to guarantee every National Guard and Army Reservist in America health care for life. These are men and women that are going to Iraq, they are going to Afghanistan. If they have not been, they are headed that way, and if they are coming back, they are probably getting ready to go again. Yet they are treated different than our full-time men and women in uniform at a time when we are really dispatching them the same. The reality is they deserve health care for life, they deserve health care like the full-time soldiers.

Yet this House rejected that proposal today because they said it would cost \$1 billion. Because of the reckless spending going on in our Nation, we are spending that much money in about two days simply paying interest on the national debt.

I want to talk more about the debt and the deficit, but at this time it gives me great honor to introduce the Cochair For Policy for the Blue Dog Coalition to speak more about the debt and the deficit and how it impacts all of us as Americans, Democrats and Republicans alike, and that is my friend the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER).

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding. The gentleman was focusing on one of the gravest problems our Nation has ever faced, one of the gravest threats to our children's and our grandchildren's well-being, because those debt payments the gentleman is talking about, the interest payments, they are like a tax that

can never be repealed until our Nation one day, we hope and pray, will return to a surplus. We had a couple years of surplus under President Clinton, but, sadly, those days are gone. Now we have plunged deep back into debt.

As the gentleman points out, the debt now is \$7.7 trillion. We all as Blue Dogs have signs like this outside of our office doors so that anybody who visits our offices here in Washington or back home, and for me that is Nashville, Tennessee, can see exactly the hole that we have dug for our Nation's future and how much it is per person, \$26,000 per person. So I appreciate the gentleman's focus on this grave problem.

Blue Dogs have been great leaders on this issue. We will talk in a few moments about the 12 step plan that the Blue Dogs have put forward to try to rescue our Nation from this debt binge that we have been on. It is kind like the 12 step plan for Alcoholics Anonymous, 12 steps to get out of a problem that so many Americans are unwilling to face up to and recognize.

Before we do that, I would like to take a moment to give our friends in Congress and across the country some key dates so they can write these down and look at the deficit and the debt from a little bit different perspective.

Date number one is last year, 2004. Why is that significant? Because the auditor for the United States of America, David Walker of the GAO, said it was "arguably the worst year in American fiscal history." That is pretty grave news. If you had a company and your auditor said you have been through one of the worst years in history, you would probably be facing bankruptcy. That is what the U.S. auditor said about last year. Most people do not know about that. That news should get out.

Take the year 2005, this year. What did we do about the deficit and the debt? Well, the Republican majority rammed a budget through this body, \$2.6 trillion, in a record-setting 2 hours. That is from start to finish, from the first moment we could look at the document to final passage vote, never get to see it again, \$2.6 trillion in 2 hours. If that is not financial mismanagement and irresponsibility, I do not know what is.

The next date is 2009. That is the date when we will be spending more money on interest on the national debt than we will on all regular domestic government in America. Due to the deficits and the debts that the Bush administration has accumulated, our debt burden will be so great by then, by the last year of the Bush administration, we will have to spend more money to our creditors than we will on our citizens. In a sense it will be a better deal then to be a creditor of this country than to be a citizen of this country. That is an outrage. That is the first time in American history that has ever happened.

Another key date is the year 2012. That is when the Chinese, if current

rates continue, will own all of our debt. In fact, a firm in Connecticut has predicted by February 9, 2012, the Chinese will own all of our foreign debt. That is another outrage. The Chinese are not necessarily the friendliest holders of this debt. To be financially beholden to them is really a national security risk.

Another key date is 2017. That is the date we will have the first honest deficits in America, because that is the date the Social Security surplus will diminish down to zero. Then the true size of the deficit will be unveiled, because, as the gentleman knows, the deficit last year was not \$412 billion, like most people think, which is still an all time U.S. record. The deficit was \$569 billion, because the Social Security surplus was \$155 billion last year, and it was used to hide the true size of the deficit.

Another key date is 2035. That is when Standard & Poor's, the bond rating agency, says that American debt will become junk bond debt because we will have so little financial credibility in the markets. That is not from a government official, that is from the official business rating agency.

Finally, probably the worst number of all, this is truly so hard to believe that I think it needs a chart to display it, the General Accounting Office says that by the year 2040 it will take all revenues collected by the Federal Government just to pay interest on the debt. In other words, by the year 2040, just 35 years from now, there will be no money left, not one red cent, for any of our national defense needs, for any Social Security, for any Medicare, for any anything. It will take all of that money just to pay interest on the debt. That is an outrage, and it is a particular outrage if our only creditor then is the Chinese government.

We are clearly on a road to ruin. We have to change our course. We need to change our course immediately. Sadly, this Congress is not doing that. They need to follow the Blue Dog 12 step plan.

I appreciate the gentleman's great leadership on this issue as one of our leading Blue Dog Members.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman from Tennessee. If I understand the gentleman correctly, what the gentleman is telling us is that basically the government of the United States of America as we know it today ends in 2040 if we continue down this path of reckless fiscal spending?

Mr. COOPER. The gentleman is exactly correct. We are the greatest Nation on Earth, we are the greatest Nation in the history of the world, and that will probably end well before 2040 if we keep on the current path.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, it sounds outlandish, until you stop and look at history. No country has stood forever. Every country has undergone changes. What the gentleman is saying is according to the Government Accounting Office, not some Democratic Party

group or some Republican Party group, but according to the Government Accounting Office, if we continue to spend at the rate that we are spending today, if we continue to borrow at the rate we are borrowing today, what the gentleman is saying is that the Government Accounting Office is saying, we are not saying this, the Government Accounting Office, not a bipartisan, but a nonpartisan Federal agency, is saying that beginning in 2040, every dime of every tax dollar in America will simply go to pay interest on the national debt?

Mr. COOPER. The gentleman is exactly correct. And it is terrible to deliver such tough news to the American people, but the GAO is telling us the truth, in a nonpartisan fashion, as the gentleman indicates. And this bad news is not 35 years off. As I indicated earlier, the GAO has already said that the year 2004, last year, was "arguably the worst year in American fiscal history." They are saying that is only going to get worse still on the path that we are on, on the high deficit, high debt path we are on.

□ 2245

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, what the gentleman from Tennessee is talking about is the debt. We are not even talking about the deficit yet, but debt. Again, our Nation is spending \$13 billion a month, over \$13 billion a month simply paying interest on the national debt. That is \$444 million a day, that is \$18 million an hour, that is \$308,000 a minute, or \$5,100 a second.

On top of that, we have the deficit, and the gentleman from Tennessee talked about this a little bit. It is hard now to think back that we had a balanced budget in this Nation from 1998 through 2001.

Mr. COOPER. Just 5 years ago.

Mr. ROSS. Just 5 years ago. Ever since I was a small child growing up in Hope, Arkansas, I heard people talk about how it was the Democrats who spent all the money; yet it was President Clinton that left this Nation with a balanced budget from 1998 to 2001. Now, this administration, this Republican Congress has given us the largest budget deficit ever in our Nation's history for a 5th year in a row.

It started in 2001. The deficit was \$128 billion, with Social Security, and what I mean by that is they borrow money from the Social Security Trust Fund to pay for government spending that is above and beyond what tax dollars bring in. No wonder they are talking about the need to reform Social Security. No wonder they would not give me a hearing on a vote on the first bill I filed as a Member of Congress back in 2001, which was a bill to tell the politicians in Washington to keep their hands off the Social Security Trust Fund.

In 2002, the deficit was \$157 billion. In 2003, it went to \$377 billion. In 2004, it went to \$412 billion. In 2005, it went to

\$427 billion. That is counting the money that is borrowed from Social Security. If it was not for Social Security, those numbers would be much larger. If it was not for the money being borrowed from the Social Security Trust Fund, last year's deficit would have been \$567 billion; this year's deficit, \$589 billion.

Now, where is this money coming from that we are borrowing? Japan, \$702 billion. We have borrowed \$702 billion from Japan. Mr. Speaker, \$250 billion from China, the Caribbean Banking Centers, I have never heard of such; \$103 billion our Nation has borrowed from the Caribbean Banking Centers to do what? To run our government where we are spending more than we are taking in.

Now, some people may want to pause and say, well, America is at war. Well, that is true, and no one supports our troops any more than I do. I have a brother-in-law in the U.S. Air Force, I have a first cousin in the U.S. Army, and I am so very proud of them. Last August 11, I was in Iraq to see some 3,000 National Guard soldiers from Arkansas; and as long as we have troops in Iraq, I am going to support them and provide them the funding they need to get the job done and to get home as safely as they possibly can.

But that makes up about 20 percent of this deficit. Eighty percent of it is coming from reckless spending and from tax cuts. This is the first time in America's history that we have cut taxes when America is at war. So we are asking these men and women to take a year to a year and a half away from their jobs and away from their families and go to Iraq and fight this war, and then come home, go back to work, and pay taxes to pay for the war they fought. This is the first time we have ever cut taxes when America is at war. It may make for good politics, but it makes for bad, it makes for horrible fiscal policy.

I did pretty good off of tax cuts last year, but my kids have to pay for them someday, because we borrowed the money from the Caribbean Banking Centers to give me a tax cut. And the list goes on and on. Korea, we have borrowed \$67.1 billion. OPEC nations, I mean, we wonder why gas is over two bucks a gallon. OPEC nations have loaned our Nation to fund our government and our tax cuts \$65.3 billion. Germany, \$59.5 billion; Taiwan, \$59.1 billion; and Mexico, for crying out loud, has loaned the United States of America \$40.6 billion to pay for tax cuts for the wealthiest people in this country, and then ask our men and women to go to Iraq, fight this war, come home, get a job, pay taxes, and pay for the war that they have fought.

There is so much more that we could talk about, but before I get too carried away, I would like to yield back to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER).

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is focusing on the problem, and

I think the American people are hungry for more facts, more real information about the situation we are in. I would like to encourage them to look on the Web site of an institution called the Cato Institute. It is here in Washington, D.C. It is not a Democratic group. If anything, they are mainly Republican, but they issued a report on May 3, 2005. It is by Stephen Slavinski, and it talks about how under this Republican-only government, because Republicans run the White House and the Senate and the House of Representatives, we have seen the biggest spending binge since Lyndon Baines Johnson in the 1960s.

It is not just defense-related. If we look at nondefense spending programs, it is the biggest spending binge since Richard Nixon. Most Americans do not know this, and they do not know that we just went through arguably the worst year in American fiscal history. So I appreciate the gentleman sharing the message.

Several of our colleagues have arrived, and it is probably appropriate at this time to recognize them.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from Tennessee joining us tonight as we talk about this huge crisis facing America, the debt and the deficit, and the Blue Dog Coalition's desire to try to restore some common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. This is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. This is a commonsense issue, and this is about trying to restore some fiscal discipline and common sense to our Nation's government.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the deficit this year, \$589 billion, someone the other day asked me, they said, Mike, what is \$1 billion? I put that number in my calculator and get that little E at the end. Well, a billion seconds ago, Richard Nixon was President. Mr. Speaker, 6.8 billion seconds ago, President George Washington was sworn into office. A billion minutes ago was just after the time of Christ, and to count out 1 billion nonstop without sleep or eating would take 38½ years.

So we are talking about a number with a lot of zeroes, and we are talking about money that is going down this deep, dark hole to simply pay interest on the national debt due to reckless fiscal policies that could be going to build new elementary schools, to invest in education, to invest in our teachers, to provide our National Guard and Reservists with health insurance, not just during a time of war, but all the time. We could build roads, we could create jobs, we could create economic opportunities in this era where 9 million people are out of work. None of these things are being done because of this horrible, reckless, irresponsible fiscal policy.

To talk more about this, a fellow Blue Dog member, another one from Tennessee, Tennessee is full of fiscally conservative Democrats, and that is my colleague, the gentleman from Ten-

nessee (Mr. DAVIS), and I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from Arkansas; and, certainly, it is a privilege to serve in the U.S. House with my good friend, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER). The gentleman at one time served the district that I represent, and he is one of the few great intellects we have in Tennessee. He is, in my opinion, very analytic on this issue, and it is certainly a pleasure to follow the gentleman, although sometimes quite difficult, obviously, but he is someone we can be proud of.

I am extremely pleased to be a part of a group who call themselves Blue Dog Democrats, and there is a reason for that. We truly believe that deficit hawks and defense hawks are something that America believes in, and that is why I can believe in this group, in this caucus of 30-some-odd individuals who have committed themselves to fiscal responsibility and being sure that our Nation is defended against our enemies, and our enemy today comes in more than one way. It certainly can come in the form of what happened on September 11 from individuals who want to do harm to liberty and freedom. It can also come from an economic assault on this Nation.

I want to talk some about that in a few moments. But as we look at what has happened in this country since 2000 and look at the huge deficits, and it is my understanding that if we take the trade deficits in the last 4 years and total those up, I have heard that it is greater than the entire deficits, trade deficits in the history of this country.

What does that mean, and what does that do for us? It means we are losing our jobs. It means that as that continues to happen, we will also start losing our revenue streams. So we have got to start looking at putting our house in order and managing what we are doing today. Otherwise, this country not only could be attacked by some military power; I am not sure there is one in the world that would threaten to do that, by those who are terrorists who would threaten this country or attack this country, but the economic threat to our Nation is almost as equally dangerous today unless we get our fiscal house in order.

To my colleagues and folks back home who may be watching, this may sound a little partisan to you, but a lot of folks back home on both sides of the aisle I think that have supported me, and I appreciate that, but I think it is time that I expressed my views pretty strongly because I love this country. I want my grandchildren to be sure that they enjoy the same liberties and opportunities and options in their life that this wonderful country gave me.

I do believe that this administration and the Republican majority has spent a great deal of time in the first session of the 109th Congress trying to convince the American people that Social Security is in a crisis. Well, that is debatable, and I am sure Congress will

spend valuable time over the next few months arguing about how to fix this system. While I think that we should address Social Security's pending solvency problems at some point in the future, I truly believe the responsible and moral thing for this Congress to do is to address the crisis that is knocking at our front door.

That crisis is a \$7.7 trillion national debt, over \$600 billion a year in trade deficits, and over \$400 billion a year in budget deficits. These numbers are so big that they sound like something out of a science fiction movie. If only they were science fiction. Sadly, it is really the fact.

Since this administration has taken office, we have seen, as the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER) said a moment ago, the largest Federal increase in spending since Lyndon Johnson. Our friends on the other side of the aisle often cite that 9/11 and the war on terrorism are responsible for this. There is no doubt it is true that the new threats to our security has caused a need for new spending in the areas of defense and homeland security. But even if we exclude those spending increases, we have still seen under this administration and Republican majority the largest spending increase in the past 30 years. I find it ironic that the party of small government has overseen a 33 percent growth in government during the President's first term.

As a recent publication by the Cato Institute says, the GOP establishment in Washington today has become a defender of big government.

Mr. Speaker, maybe this is just a result of partisan politics during the Clinton administration, but Republicans and Democrats were forced to work together if they were going to get anything done. What happened? From fiscal year 1998 to 2001, we actually had budget surpluses and a projected overall surplus in the range of \$5 trillion. Even if we remove the Social Security surpluses from the total budget line for these years, we still had budget surpluses in fiscal year 1999 and 2000, and the largest budget deficit we saw was \$32 billion.

Under this administration, we have seen on-budget deficits as high as \$567 billion, a remarkable turnaround. In my humble opinion, the Republican majority has been reckless and spent the taxpayers' money like drunken sailors on a weekend pass.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to resolve that pass and to revoke it and take a stand for all of the American people because, sadly, the Members of Congress currently serving are not going to have to pay off this debt. Instead, our children and grandchildren will have to pay it off. Our soldiers who are serving us so bravely in Iraq will come back home and find they have to foot the bill for the war we sent them off to fight; and this is simply wrong. It is simply immoral.

□ 2300

There is hope. It is called the Blue Dog Coalition 12-point plan. And I am up here to ask for an up-or-down vote. We have heard that a lot recently, have we not? An up-or-down vote for the people of America. An up-or-down vote, because ultimately this issue does not just affect people in certain districts. It affects all Americans.

So I am here for the American people asking for an up-or-down vote. I want an up-or-down vote on H.R. 903, the Fiscal Accountability and Honesty Act of 2005. This will, among other things, extend PAYGO that expired in 2002 and close the loopholes on emergency spending.

I want an up-or-down vote on H.R. 121, a package of rules changes for the House. These changes will require a rollcall vote on raising the debt ceiling and give Members of Congress 3 days so that we can actually read and study the bills we vote on. I mean, if the Republican majority is so confident that the legislation they send to the floor is right for the American people, should it not withstand 3 days' public scrutiny? What is there to hide? Why not an up-or-down vote on 121?

I want an up-or-down vote on House Joint Resolution 22, the Balanced Budget Amendment. This amendment has already been passed by the House as part of the GOP Contract with America.

Now, the Blue Dogs, in an effort to provide security for our current and future retirees, have added language to protect Social Security benefits from being cut to balance the budget. There are 49 States in this Nation that require a balanced budget. If it is good enough for them, it is good enough for me.

Mr. Speaker, I will repeat this three or four times. Give us an up-or-down vote on budget restraint issues, measures that have been introduced, get them out of the committee, bring them on this floor. Give us an up-or-down vote, an up-or-down vote. If it is good enough for judges and Presidential appointees, it is good enough for all 200-some-odd million people who live in this country.

So to the majority on this floor, I ask you, an up-or-down vote. Now is the time. It is time to get it done.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS). And just to quickly quote, I believe the newspaper there in Tennessee is called *The Tennessean*, and on May 9, in an editorial they said this: "If Members want to get serious about addressing deficits, they should take an approach more like those proposed by the Blue Dog Coalition, which includes Tennessee Democrats John Tanner," one of the founders of the Blue Dogs, "Jim Cooper," who has been with us here to-night and will return, "Lincoln Davis," who just spoke, "and Harold Ford, Jr. The Blue Dogs not only emphasize the need to balance the books, they advocate bringing down the national debt,

which has climbed to more than \$7 trillion and is becoming a national security issue since much of the debt is in the hands of foreign investors." Again, the *Tennessean* editorial on Monday, May 9, 2005.

As the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS) indicated, this is not about partisan politics. I do not know about you, but I am sick and tired of all the partisan bickering that goes on at our Nation's Capital. It should not be about whether it is a Democratic idea or Republican idea. It ought to be about is it a commonsense idea, and does it make sense for the people that sent us here to be their voice and to represent them.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, thank you for an opportunity to be here tonight. And I deeply appreciate it. This is my second term, so I am kind of new as far as being a Member of Congress. But it is a delightful group that I am with, and I certainly look forward to this Nation having better leadership with individuals like those I serve with who are Members of our Blue Dog Coalition.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS) for joining us this evening and for his commitment to trying to restore some fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

You know, when you hear about the Blue Dogs, this group of fiscally conservative Democrats, a lot of people think we are all from the South, and they all think we sound kind of like I do. And that is not the case at all. We stretch from California to Long Island.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield as much time as the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL) might consume. The gentleman from New York will talk more about this crisis that we find ourselves in, and in a little bit we will be coming back as a group to talk more about this 12-point plan that we have to try and help get us out of this hole that we find ourselves. But at this time I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL).

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS). The gentleman and I were elected in the same class, in 2000. I thank the gentleman for his leadership for so ably representing the conservative values of his district. I do not agree with every one of his positions, but nobody advocates more fearlessly for the interests of his district than the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS).

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS). I am honored to be on the floor with both of them this evening.

The gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) noted that I am from New York, from Long Island, New York. One of the wisest decisions that I ever made in coming to Congress with the gentleman was to join the Blue Dogs. And,

in fact, most of the Blue Dogs do come from the South. I am probably the only Blue Dog who speaks with a distinct New York accent. Sometimes we need a translator to figure each other out.

But it really does not matter whether you are from the Deep South or the south shore of Long Island. What binds Blue Dogs are principally two issues: Number one, a sense of fiscal responsibility. We believe that we ought to play by the same rules on the floor of the House that every American family has to play by at their kitchen tables. You have got to balance the books. Those folks do not have the ability to simply print money in their basements. They have got to balance their books. They have got to reconcile their checkbooks. We believe the same.

The second thing that we believe is that we have got to have a strong and robust military, something I agree with passionately.

Now, I have the privilege of serving with the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER) on the Armed Services Committee. There are only two New Yorkers who serve on the Armed Services Committee. I am the only New York Democrat on that committee. And I call myself a Harry Truman Democrat. I believe in a strong and robust defense. I spend most of my time on this floor in this Congress thinking about how to keep our country stronger and safer. And what I want to talk about just for a few minutes this evening is the linkage between this \$7 trillion debt and our national security, our national defense, because this figure does not make us stronger in the long run.

Think about what happened on the floor of the House just a few hours ago. We spent the day debating a Defense authorization approaching \$500 billion. And at the end of that debate, our Blue Dog colleague, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), stood up and suggested that we make a simple, but important, change in the budget that was about to pass. He said to our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, it does not matter whether you are Republican or Democrat; let us do the right thing for our Guard and Reserves. Let us provide them with health care. Let us not tell a single American Guard or Reservist that if you are going to go fight for us in Iraq or Afghanistan, 40 percent of our military in Iraq, Guard and Reserve, if you are going to do that, when you come home we are not going to abandon you, abandon your families with respect to health care. If you need health care, we will take care of it. If you are willing to sacrifice yourself for us, we are willing to take care of your health care, your health insurance, not just while you are fighting, but after.

And what was the response that we heard? It is the same response that we hear time after time after time on the floor of the House. It is not that anybody is against our Guard and Reserve. It is not that anybody is against pro-

viding health care for our military. It is just that we cannot afford it because of this number.

Mr. ROSS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ISRAEL. I will be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ROSS. The gentleman is telling us that we, tonight, the majority in this Chamber refused to provide health insurance every day of the week, every week of the month, every month of the year for our men and women who have gone to Iraq, who are going to Iraq, or who have been to Iraq, because they said we could not afford it.

Mr. ISRAEL. That is exactly what happened.

Mr. ROSS. And it was going to be a billion a year.

Mr. ISRAEL. The gentleman is correct, a billion a year.

Mr. ROSS. And this is the same crowd that gave us a budget this year that includes \$106 billion in new tax cuts.

Mr. ISRAEL. These are the Members of this body who argue that we can afford to make every single penny of tax cuts permanent, but we cannot afford to provide health care for Members of the National Guard and the Reserve who are fighting for survival around the world.

Mr. ROSS. If the gentleman would yield, so what you are telling me is that the majority on the floor of the U.S. House this evening decided it was more important to maintain \$106 billion in tax cuts and not provide health insurance year round for our Reservists and Guardsmen that have either been to Iraq, are going to Iraq, or just got back from Iraq or are in Iraq today. They were not willing to take \$106 billion in tax cuts and make it \$105 billion so they could take care of our men and women in uniform?

Mr. ISRAEL. If the gentleman would yield, the gentleman is precisely correct. That is the decision that was made tonight. But it gets worse, because many of us on the Armed Services Committee approached our colleagues and said, you know, if somebody is willing to go to Iraq and they lose their life, we ought to be able to take care of their life insurance. We ought to pay for their life insurance.

□ 2310

The answer was, great idea, we cannot afford it. After all, we have a \$7 trillion debt. Nobody ever says, we do not care about our troops; nobody ever says, we do not care about our military.

It all comes down to this: We used to have a \$5.6 trillion surplus. Maybe in those days we could support our military and our military families, but now we have got into deep debt. We have got to make tough decisions so we can improve life insurance for our troops, our military families. We can pay a very modest amount in health care for our Guard and Reserve because of this debt, but also because we want to make sure we can make those tax cuts permanent. Now, that is fundamentally unfair. That is just bad priority.

Meanwhile, as we are telling our Guard and Reserves that we cannot afford their health care, which does not make us stronger, for 2 years, as we told military families that we could not take care of their life insurance, increase their life insurance, increase the death gratuity.

Meanwhile, we continue to engage in reckless fiscal policies with the enemies that we are told that we will have in the future, namely, the Chinese. Every time you have a briefing they tell you, you have to start worrying about China, but meanwhile we are allowing them to finance our debts.

So the adversaries that we are told we should worry about in the next few years are keeping the lights on in the House of Representatives, are running our Humvees in Iraq. How can you have a coherent national security policy when you have to rely on the adversaries that you expect to finance your Treasury, when they own 40 percent of your debt? It makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

The final point I want to make is this: This is bad enough. The decisions that are made on the floor of the House with respect to our military are bad enough, but think about what our children are going to have to deal with when they are here on the floor of the House, when they have to figure out how they are going to pay their taxes, balance their checkbooks.

We have a \$2.5 trillion budget right now. In 10 years when my kids are approximately my age or approaching my age, think about what that budget is going to do to them. Their defense budget, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER) probably knows this, will likely approach \$600 billion. Interest on the debt which they have to pay will likely approach \$500 billion. And everything else, whatever is left in the budget will be allocated to all of their needs, Social Security, and Medicare, the FBI, education, environmental protection, crime reduction.

That is an intolerable budget that we are inflicting on them.

One of the things that the Blue Dogs emphasize is our fundamental responsibility to be fiscally conservative, but to give our kids a better, safer, stronger world than we have today. What we are doing with these numbers, with these policies is raising our kids' taxes, straining their military, mortgaging them to our potential adversaries.

And I am reminded of the very profound words of one of our distinguished colleagues, another member of the Tennessee delegation, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER), who last spring said to a gathering of Blue Dogs that no nation in the history of humankind has ever been strong, free and bankrupt.

If nothing else, our obligation in Washington, DC., in the administration, in the House of Representatives, is to put politics aside and agree to make sure that we are strong, free and not bankrupt. And all we have done

over the past several years is to strain our military, deny military families the basic, decent conditions they need, the health care they need, the life insurance they need; and end up owing more to the adversaries we are told to worry about more and more every day.

We have an obligation to treat our military families better, to treat our troops better, to treat our kids better. Thank goodness the Blue Dogs take that obligation seriously. I thank the gentleman for giving me this time.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I would advise the gentleman to continue to join us if he will.

The gentleman speaks to us on these veteran issues and these military issues with a lot of authority as a member of the House Committee on Armed Services. And I want to thank the gentleman for what he does for our veterans and our men and women in uniform as we continue to try and advance health insurance around the clock for our men and women in the National Guard and our Reservists.

I think what the gentleman from Long Island has basically summed up for us this evening is about priorities. It is about, do we want another \$106 billion in tax cuts when we borrow 45 percent of that money from Japan and China and the Caribbean banking centers and Korea and the OPEC nations and Germany and Taiwan and Mexico? Or do we want to do right by our men and women in uniform, by our veterans?

Do we want to build the kind of roads we need to create jobs and economic opportunities for the future and do we want to fix Medicare? All this talk about Social Security, if we do not touch it, the first reduction in benefits happens when I am 91 years of age. And yet Medicare, which is what our seniors count on to stay healthy and get well, is bankrupt in 14 years. And yet no one is talking about that.

These are priorities that are important to those of us in the Blue Dog Coalition. And we understand that as long as we continue to borrow money from foreign countries, as we continue to borrow money to the tune of \$1.1 billion per day, think about that, as a Nation we are spending \$1.1 billion a day more than we are taking in.

It is about priorities. And until we get our fiscal house in order, we are not going to be able to meet the needs of our children, our grandchildren and the future of this great country.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield at this time to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER), the cochair for policy for the Blue Dog Coalition. I thought we could engage in a colloquy to discussing the 12-point reform plan. We do not just want to beat up the Republicans for bankrupting this country. We want to offer a solution, and we have got one.

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman yielding. There are several ways out of this terrible dilemma that we are in as a Nation.

First, we have to acknowledge that we have Republican cosponsors for our proposal. Particularly the Republican Study Committees deserves great thanks for their lending a hand to our proposal. A number of us have cosponsored their proposals. The solution out of this has to be bipartisan.

Our 12-point plan includes the following elements: It includes a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Remember, that was part of the Republican Contract with America, but somehow they have forgotten about it these last 10 years. We need to have a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, this is important to note, and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL) mentioned it earlier this evening, those of us with families, we get around the kitchen table and we have to balance the family budget. My wife and I own a small-town family pharmacy with 12 employees back home. We have to have a balanced budget. Forty-nine States in America, I was in the State Senate in Arkansas for 10 years; 49 States in America require a balanced budget.

Is it asking too much of the politicians in Washington to give the citizens of this country a balanced budget? That is what we are talking about doing here.

Mr. COOPER. The gentleman is correct. Our balanced budget amendment would completely protect Social Security so it would not in any way be endangered by this. It would also require a three-fifths majority of this House in order to raise the debt limit. So it would really do a lot to control the spending binge we are on.

Another key element of the plan is, pay as you go. In other words, this Congress could no longer buy on credit. We would take up the national credit card, cut it up, put it away.

Alan Greenspan, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, says this is probably the single most important policy reform we could undertake. Why does he say that? Because we had it for 12 years and it worked brilliantly. We had it in place from 1990 to 2002. And under Republican leadership they let it expire, so the pay-as-you-go principle no longer operates. We need to reinstate PAYGO.

Mr. ROSS. So the gentleman is saying that under President Clinton that we had what was called pay-as-you-go rules in place, which meant that if you are going to raise spending, you have got to cut spending somewhere else, which led to the first balanced budget in 40 years; and now that no longer applies to the House here?

□ 2320

Mr. COOPER. The gentleman is exactly correct. And if you cut taxes, you have to make up the lost revenue, either through spending cuts or other taxes. And it is an important way to live within your means, by cutting up the credit cards so you are no longer

borrowing more than you can afford. It is a key principle.

Another element of the Blue Dog spending plan is to put spending caps on spending, so that we live within our means; so that we live within our own budget; so that the budget does not become a joke, as it so often does within this House.

Another element of the Blue Dog reform plan is to require our Federal agencies to live within their means and get their fiscal houses in order, because so many Federal agencies are not auditable. They do not know how to account for the money that they are charged with, and it is very important that they live within their means just as any family or business has to do in this country.

Mr. ROSS. If the gentleman will yield for a moment there, I want to go back and make sure I understand. When you talk about requiring agencies to put their fiscal houses in order, you are talking about Federal agencies?

Mr. COOPER. Exactly.

Mr. ROSS. It is my understanding that the Government Accounting Office found that 16 of 23 major Federal agencies cannot even issue a simple audit of their books.

Mr. COOPER. They would be pretty much out of business if they were a public company in this country, and they are all large enough to be giant public companies. And the Federal Government simply cannot find \$24 billion. They do not know where it went.

This is an outrage. And guess what the worst offending Federal agency happens to be? The U.S. Pentagon. And it is not because we are at war. Even during peacetime, the Pentagon has not been able to account for the money it is spending.

Mr. ROSS. That is the agency that spends \$800 on a hammer and \$600 on a commode seat?

Mr. COOPER. That has been true in the past. We hope that is not true today.

Mr. ROSS. So you are saying, if the gentleman will continue to yield, that the Federal Government cannot account for \$24.5 billion that it spent in 2003; and what this plan would do is it would say to those agencies that we are going to freeze your budget until you learn how to be fiscally responsible?

Mr. COOPER. We have heard their excuses for too long. So this would freeze them until they learned how to behave and learned how to count the money they are entrusted with.

Another key element of the plan is that Congress has to tell taxpayers back home how much we are spending, because right now many bills go through this body with a voice vote, with no cost estimate. So we are proposing, just as a place to start, not that this is a perfect number, but any bill that spends more than \$50 million we will have to have a recorded vote on so that the taxpayers back home will

know who voted for what; so there is finally some accountability in this body.

Mr. ROSS. So if the gentleman will yield, right now, with the leadership in this House, under the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), they will allow a voice vote without an actual rollcall vote on millions, if not billions, of dollars of taxpayer money being spent; and what we are saying here is, if you are going to spend \$50 million or more of taxpayer money to fund our government, it requires a vote of the full Congress?

Mr. COOPER. A recorded vote so that people back home can tell how we behave up here.

Mr. ISRAEL. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. COOPER. I would be delighted to yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. ISRAEL. I thank the gentleman for yielding. Does the gentleman recall when the House of Representatives voted on the entire \$2.5 trillion budget resolution?

Mr. COOPER. That was some 3 weeks ago we had the budget resolution. They rammed it through here in 2 hours.

Mr. ISRAEL. And would the gentleman state how long Members of Congress actually had to read that \$2.5 trillion budget?

Mr. COOPER. The gentleman asks an interesting question. I am on the Committee on the Budget, and we were only allowed 2 hours from first glance of the document, and this is a complex document, any document would be that spends \$2.6 trillion, and 2 hours later, final passage and you never see it again.

That is an outrage to ram through a budget like that. No responsible board of directors in America, no responsible businessman or woman would tolerate that situation, yet it has become commonplace in the U.S. House of Representatives under Republican leadership.

And lest this be viewed as partisan, check again the Cato Institute report. They say that government accountability has suffered terribly under our all-Republican government because there are no checks and balances any more. There is nobody calling them to task, and so we have got to restore fiscal sanity to this Nation.

Another key element of the Blue Dog spending plan is to set aside a real rainy day fund. We know that emergencies and tragedies are going to occur. Let us set aside a little money in advance so that not everything becomes an emergency here.

We spend tens, sometimes hundreds, of billions of dollars a year here because it is a so-called emergency. And some of them are. But in the most recently past emergency supplemental bill of \$82 billion, a lot of that was for our troops in Iraq, and we are all for that; but a lot of it was for other stuff that powerful Congressmen and Senators snuck in the bill because they knew they could get away with it.

Mr. ROSS. If the gentleman will yield on that, I think it is so important

that we do have a rainy day fund. We have had natural disasters every year since I have been here. We either have droughts or floods, and sometimes both depending on where you live; and we have to be there for our farm families if we want to have a safe and reliable source for food and fiber, which I believe is every bit as important to our national security as oil.

But what is so important about the need for a rainy day fund, I believe, is it helps stop the deficit spending. You have money set aside in a fund knowing that something is going to happen.

And the gentleman raised the issue of the \$82 billion supplement. Most folks think that went to support our troops. I supported it, because a large part of it did go to our support our troops. But the reality is during that same week on the floor of the House we did two things: we passed a budget that included \$500 million in cuts to farm families in this country, and in the same week we passed \$82 billion, and most people think it was all to support our troops. I supported it because part of it was and I support our troops, but what most people do not know is that that bill included a \$266 million buyout, you have heard of tobacco buyouts, to do a buyout of opium farmers in Afghanistan.

Now if we cannot find Osama bin Laden hiding in the hills over there in Afghanistan, how in the world are we going to police what thousands of Afghan farmers are or are not growing? Just one example of what the gentleman is talking about that goes on that I believe people need to be held accountable for.

Mr. COOPER. The gentleman is exactly correct. The other elements of the Blue Dog reform plan, point number seven, would be let us have real votes, recorded votes, on raising the debt ceiling for this country.

A lot of Americans think we vote on that here. Well, we used to, in the good old days. But now, under Republican leadership, if you voted for Speaker HASTERT, you also voted to make debt ceiling votes disappear. They no longer happen anymore.

And to put it in perspective, it took the first 204 years of our Nation's history to run up the first \$1 trillion in debt, and now we are doing it about every year or two. That is an outrage. And no one is recorded in their votes when we do that. Every year or two it is another trillion; we raise the debt ceiling. And that vote has simply disappeared.

Mr. ROSS. If the gentleman will yield, he is absolutely right. It took 200 years to go \$1 trillion in debt, and now we do it every 20 months in this Nation. But in terms of raising the debt limit, it is my understanding that what the gentleman means by that is it is kind of like a credit card with a credit limit. And when the Federal Government reaches its limit, the Congress has to vote either by voice vote or rollcall to raise the debt limit before we can exceed whatever it was before.

And it is my understanding that we exceeded the debt limit back in October of 2004, but we really did not want to bring attention to it. The leadership here did not want to bring attention to the fact. They did not want to bring us back to raise the debt limit weeks before the election, so they literally used Federal employees' 401(k) savings contributions to fund our government for 2 or 3 weeks, to buy time until the election was over and bring us back up here.

As a small business owner, if I do that with my employees' 401(k) plans, I go to the Federal pen. And yet it is my understanding that is how we ran our government in late October and early November of 2004.

Mr. COOPER. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is exactly correct.

In the little time we have remaining, let me make sure we finish the remaining Blue Dog points here.

We have to admit that Congress likes to spend money on its own pet projects. It is called earmark spending. We do not ban that, but we require a written justification for every project, so that things like Senator CHARLES GRASSLEY's \$50 million indoor rain forest in Iowa would no longer happen without written justification. The Wall Street Journal reported "it would be cheaper to fly everyone in Iowa to a real rain forest rather than build a fake one somewhere in Iowa."

Another key element of the Blue Dog reform plan is to give us the 3 days that we have under House rules to read these bills so that we have a chance to know what is going on; so we have a chance to share with our constituents back home what is in these bills so we can get their ideas. That is the best way to represent them, instead of ramming things through here, like our budget 3 weeks ago in 2 hours, or other legislation they rammed through in 1 day under what they call the martial law rule. That is not a pejorative; that is what they call it, a martial law rule for running our democracy.

Another key element of the Blue Dog reform plan is let us get an honest cost estimate for every bill. I mentioned earlier let us have a recorded vote for the larger bills, but we need to know what each bill costs so we have some idea what we are spending.

□ 2330

Most Americans back home are probably shocked that after 200-plus years of this great democracy, we still do not know what bills cost.

Finally, we need to make sure that each piece of legislation fits within the budget, so we do not routinely bust the budget. Last year, I think four or five of the appropriations bills busted the budget.

Finally, Congress needs to make sure that we do a better job of keeping tabs on government programs. This Congress has failed miserably, and even the most partisan Republican would admit that. Most of the oversight subcommittees have been abolished. They

do not exist anymore. There is no one to hold hearings to make sure that the taxpayers' money is being well spent. Those are the key points in the 12-point Blue Dog reform plan.

We have bipartisan support for this. Many of the elements are shared with the Republican Study Committee Plan. Many of us have also supported their reform efforts. We need to work together to form a bipartisan majority, much as our Senate colleagues did to avert the nuclear showdown on judicial nominations, get the sensible center of this Congress to come together and do the right thing for the American taxpayer.

We are so close because if just 10 or 20 of the Republicans would break from their leadership, they could do as the CATO Institute report suggests, start reforming the budget process in this House. All it takes is 10 or 20 renegades on their side to stand up for the American taxpayer. We can get budget reform. It may be the Republican Study Committee that does it. It may be the Mainstream Republicans, or the Tuesday Group that does it, but I believe the Blue Dog Democrats will be there to make sure that sensible fiscal policy is restored to this Nation.

I appreciate the gentleman holding this special order.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I would thank the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. Speaker, one of the 12 points is to ensure that the Congress reads the bills we are voting on. We cannot pass a law to make Members of Congress read a bill, but several examples have been given this evening of what we are talking about here.

Last year, before the election, there were 13 spending bills that had to pass to fund our government. Two were passed before the election. They brought us back up here after the election, saying that they could roll all 11 into one and call it the omnibus spending bill and pass it in 3 or 4 days, and they did.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), the majority leader, did. It was over 1,000 pages, over 12,000 local spending projects. We had just a few hours to read it. Sure enough, it was full of errors, including allowing congressional staffers to look at people's tax returns. And so all 435 Members had to fly back up here to fix that, among other things.

That is just one of 12 common-sense budget reform steps that we think have to happen before Democrats or Republicans can provide a truthful, meaningful budget again.

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, just one concluding point. This Blue Dog 12-point plan is not radical or inventive. It is what every American family has to abide by every single day. All this plan says is, we will play by the same rules that our businesses are supposed to play by and our families are supposed to play by. I do not know of a single American family that can just decide to go beyond their means and

tell their bank, I want to borrow more. We should play by the same rules.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER) for their stalwart leadership on fiscal responsibility and common sense.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, in the hour that we have discussed the debt and the deficit, our Nation has borrowed \$48 million. On top of that, our Nation has paid \$18 million in interest on the national debt. That is \$66 million that our Nation has spent during the 60 minutes we have been here.

It is about priorities. That money could have gone for better education, better roads, and better veterans' benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I raise these issues because my grandparents left this Nation better than they found it for my parents. And my parents left this Nation better than they found it for our generation, and I believe we have a duty and an obligation to try and leave this country just a little bit better than we found it for our children and grandchildren.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mrs. EMERSON (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and May 26 on account of the death of Marie Hahn, mother of the late Representative Bill Emerson.

Mr. GINGREY (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today through 2:30 p.m. on account of his accompanying the BRAC commissioners on a site visit of NAS Atlanta.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. WOOLSEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.
 Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. FILNER, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.
 Ms. BEAN, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. GIBBONS) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. NORWOOD, for 5 minutes, May 26.
 Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, May 26.
 Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, for 5 minutes, May 26.
 Mr. GINGREY, for 5 minutes, today.
 Mr. MANZULLO, for 5 minutes, today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 35 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, May 26, 2005, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

2143. A letter from the Inspector General, Department of Defense, transmitting the annual report of the results of the assessment of voting assistance programs, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 1566 Public Law 107-107, section 1602; to the Committee on Armed Services.

2144. A letter from the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Commissioners, Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure, transmitting a detailed statement of the findings and conclusions of the Commission, together with its recommendations for such legislation and administrative actions as it considers appropriate, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 111 note, Pub. L. 108-132, Section 128(b)(3)(A) (117 Stat. 1383); to the Committee on Armed Services.

2145. A letter from the Director, Defense Finance and Accounting Service, transmitting a letter updating the May 9, 2003 notification that the DFAS planned to start an A-76 competition of the Marine Corps accounting function in which DFAS has decided not to conduct a competition at this time, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2461; to the Committee on Armed Services.

2146. A letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology, Department of Defense, transmitting the annual status report of the U.S. Chemical Demilitarization Program (CDP) as of September 30, 2004, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1521(g); to the Committee on Armed Services.

2147. A letter from the Chief of Staff, Comptroller of the Currency, transmitting four issues of the Quarterly Journal for CY 2003 and one issue for CY 2004, the annual reports for FY 2003 and 2004, and a review of the actions the Office has taken during CY 2003 and 2004 with regard to the applicability of state law to national banks, pursuant to 12 U.S.C. 14 12 U.S.C. 36(f)(1)(C); to the Committee on Financial Services.

2148. A letter from the President and Chairman, Export-Import Bank of the United States, transmitting a report on transactions involving U.S. exports to the Republic of Korea pursuant to Section 2(b)(3) of the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945, as amended, pursuant to 12 U.S.C. 635(b)(3)(i); to the Committee on Financial Services.

2149. A letter from the Vice Chairperson, Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, transmitting the Committee's final report of the special study of simplification of need analysis and application for Title IV aid, entitled "The Student Aid Gauntlet: Making Access to College Simple and Certain," pursuant to the FY 2004 Consolidated Appropriations Act; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

2150. A letter from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Copies of international agreements, other than treaties, entered into by the United States, pursuant to 1 U.S.C. 112b(a); to the Committee on International Relations.

2151. A letter from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of